REU | 2012
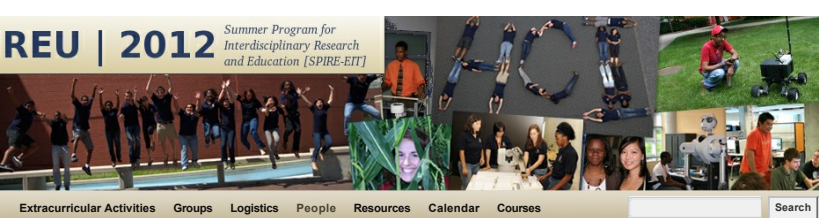### Summer Program for Interdisciplinary Research and Education [SPIRE-EIT]

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Timothy Honeywell

Posts from me

The Final Countdown
Posted on July 30, 2012 by Tim

Wow. Just five days left.

DPIVE is in a good place with everything right now. Our poster was, of course, submitted for printing this morning. Today we completed laying out all of our data into massive spreadsheets. Jon has put together the equations and diagrams we need, so it all essentially automatically processes into some nice concise figures we will include in our paper.

All that remains is putting the finishing touches on our paper and preparing ourselves for the symposium on Friday.

It's been a fantastic summer; let's go out with a bang!

Europe - The Final Countdown (Official Video)

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Closing in…
Posted on July 23, 2012 by Tim

With two weeks left, I am feeling pretty good about the status of team DPIVE. After quite a number of setbacks and complications, we have collected data from 9 pairs of participants, giving us a nice collection of data.

We met with Jon and Melissa today to discuss our plans for the rest of our time here. They both seem happy with what we've accomplished and confident in our ability to finish strong.

This afternoon we held a photo shoot in the MIRAGE, to get pictures for our paper and poster, and some video for our presentation. We got to edit our footage in the C6 control room after, which was fun: a familiar and relaxing task for a change.

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Hiccups
Posted on July 19, 2012 by Tim

At 4:45pm last Tuesday, Andrew and Ken were looking at the logs we had accumulated from our trials in the MIRAGE, and they noticed that the object matrices looked rather strange.

Ken suggested we look at the logging code, so I did. The code seemed alright, but I knew there was a possibility I had inadvertently messed something up. For some reason, our logging wasn't working, and I didn't know why. For a little while, I felt really awful.

I went and watched Inception that evening with everyone else, and got myself to relax. Afterwards, I broke the news to Andrew and Amanda, and they both took it very well. We got in touch with Ken, Melissa, and Jon about how to handle the situation, and they were all very helpful.

We went into the MIRAGE yesterday morning, and Ken took a look at everything. It turned out the error was actually stemming from one of the plugins we are using in our project and not from our code.

Most of the people who had already participated were willing to be retested, thankfully, and we have the MIRAGE reserved for a full 3-day block, so we were able to test 4 pairs yesterday afternoon, and 2 today. We have several more scheduled for tomorrow.

Things turned out quite well in the end. Thank you to all who helped!

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Thank you, Pam.
Posted on July 17, 2012 by Tim

We just had an excellent luncheon lecture from Pam, covering the details of the HCI Graduate Program here at VRAC. She gave us all the nitty-gritty details, all the important behind-the-scenes tips on how to apply, and told us how to maximize our chances of securing an assistantship. I found it an enriching talk, and I really feel more at ease about the whole process than I did before. There is quite a lot I need to get done before January, but I think I am ready to take it on.

Continuing my education and pursuing a PhD is very important to me, and though my college may not have prepared me as well as some others, I am an eager learner and a dedicated worker. I'm not sure where I'll be a year from now, I'm really not. At this point all I know is I have high hopes and dreams, and I am ready to work very hard to reach them.

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It has begun!
Posted on July 16, 2012 by Tim

Last Friday the PDIVE/DPIVE group began user testing. I was very excited about this because in the week leading up to the first tests, I was coding furiously, and desperately trying to cram in last minute tests in the MIRAGE. The scheduling for that, by the way has been a nightmare. Trying to coordinate tests and user tests with a constantly fluctuating schedule has really been a drag.

However, once we finally got in there, and managed to get all the issues sorted through (stereo flip, projector disconnects, driver issues, shutter glasses malfunctions, tracking halts, etc), we were able to run through 4 full tests. We of course now have to sift through the data, and still have 6 more tests to run through, but I am extremely happy that our hard work has paid off, and we are still on schedule.

Our poster draft is almost complete, and is looking really good, in my opinion. Amanda has done an excellent job synthesizing all of our ideas into a nice coherent design.

All in all, things are going excellently!

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Progressions
Posted on July 8, 2012 by Tim

I have not posted here in a while, and for that I apologize. There has been an awful lot happening lately, and while it has been consuming much of my time, I really should be chronicling it as well.

We are very close to having our app fully-functional in the MIRAGE. Ken has been instrumental in this process, helping us almost daily. Even though he says we are doubly-cursed, he has stuck with us through some of our **strange** and **frustrating** issues: script permissions, ssh key issues, stereo malfunctions, and GSON (Green Screens of No-Display). This afternoon we are supposed to meet with him again. It is our last chance to get everything running, since tomorrow John Deere is running studies, Wednesday we are visiting John Deere, and on Thursday we are planning to actually start conducting user studies.

It's been a very busy time, but we are progressing pretty smoothly, all things considered, and are still on schedule. We have been coming together more as a group, I think, and I am proud of the work we have been producing.

Here's to a working program, fruitful user studies, and a solid final four weeks!

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The Wonders of Sleep
Posted on June 27, 2012 by Tim

Wow, we did it. Twenty-four hours ago, I was really feeling the crush of a whole lot of things coming due at once, on top of a rather foggy mood. After a good night's sleep, we came to the table again and cranked things out all morning and, well, we got everything done that we needed to do: IRB 2.0 is finished and signed, our Research Question and Methods paragraphs are complete, and we have selected an article for Journal Club.

Phew!

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Seeing things (well, not quite yet)
Posted on June 26, 2012 by Tim

The MIRAGE is a lot of fun. Ken has been really helpful, introducing us to all the equipment and software we'll have to use to conduct our experiments. It's a lot to keep track of, and I can't even pretend to grasp all of it quite yet, but I'm learning!

Yesterday we got the makefile for our VRJ app to work, but ran into trouble when it came time to run it. It runs just fine on the main computer: object/scene import and user tracking work perfectly, it seems. However, we need to run it on the big screen, which is managed by a cluster of 6 other computers. I can log in to each of those computers individually, but they aren't saving my login info (which needs to happen in order to run the app on the cluster).

Bit by bit…

At lunch today, Dr. Gilbert mentioned TEDX Des Moines, which is apparently July 15. I would very much like to go, if at all possible.

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Gathering Steam
Posted on June 25, 2012 by Tim

The Depth Perception team is actually making progress now. We started quite slowly: since our research area is still relatively new, there are so many open paths to choose from.

We've narrowed it down to two possible experiments. We are favoring one, a cooperative pointing test. Two participants would stand at different points in the MIRAGE, both aiming at a virtual target. They will try to hit the target at the same time, and the simulation will collect data regarding their position and orientation. We can then process that data to describe their accuracy and group accuracy with regards to the particular configuration of the environment. By testing a number of different configurations, we can try to infer which of them support the greatest multi-user experience.

Ken met with us at the end of last week and gave us some code that creates a bare environment. We tried to run it in the MIRAGE, but the computers complained. It seems the old makefile requires user group permissions that we don't have. Ken is going to be meeting with us later today to see if we can revise the script and get it to work without those permissions.

Next steps: model the environment and target, import them into the program, script different target/user configurations for the trials, and write data export and processing programs.

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Scheduling
Posted on June 21, 2012 by Tim

I have enjoyed every part of my experience here at SPIRE so far. Yes, some parts have been better than others, but every activity, every course, every talk — they all have had some nugget of value. I really appreciate the work the directors are pouring into the program for our benefit. They regularly go out of their way to help us, coach us, teach us, and inspire us to greater things.

I'm used to working a deadbeat job over the summer, scraping in minimum wage for doing mind-numbing work. To instead be engaged in scientific research, working with some of the greatest minds in the field, using some of the most sophisticated tools in the world — it is such a profound dichotomy that I confess I sometimes don't quite know how to take advantage of all the resources available.

I don't ask all the questions I can. I don't read all I can. I don't write all I can. I don't code all I can. Yet I **am** doing everything I can. There is simply so much to do; so many wonderful things packed into each day that I am beginning to feel overwhelmed. I want to give every activity my full attention, yet I never have enough time to do so.

Right now I need to juggle: OpenGL class project (solar system), OpenGL final project (robotic arm), continuing research in my problem area, three approaching written assignment deadlines, and the actual design and codework for the depth perception project.

Hopefully, as this week comes to a close and we enter into the less structure portion of the summer, some larger blocks of time will emerge and I will feel freer to work on

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